

**Excerpt from "Item 250"**  
**by**  
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***250 Ways to Make America Better***

Ours is the best nation in the world. One of the reasons this is true is that we Americans always believe we can make America even better. Today, I believe we can make America better by encouraging our children to dream and dream big.

We don't do that simply by asking them to go to bed earlier.

We do it by making the critical investments in their future--the investments that inspire hope, shake souls, and convince our children that their impossible dreams are indeed possible.

We live in a time of outstanding, sometimes overwhelming, technological advancement. And these advancements have benefited us in ways that are beyond comprehension. But in some ways they have also created a culture where time is compressed. Everything is immediate. The result is often that investments are made only with an eye to short-term gain.

In other words, too often we steal from the future to survive in the present.

If there is one thing I've learned as Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration--NASA--it is that we can't afford to measure investments by the dollars that go in. We must measure the vitality of what we do by the product that comes out. And sometimes that product comes out ten, twenty, thirty years down the line.

That shouldn't deter us. It should motivate us.

If we were concerned only with short-term gain, we would never have gotten off the starting block in the race to the moon. If we worried only about the here and now, the International Space Station would be the stuff of science fiction, not history's largest peacetime scientific endeavor.

But we dreamed. We dreamed of discovering the unknown. And because we did, we expanded the frontiers of space and enhanced life here on Earth.

Tonight, a young boy may dream that he is going to be the doctor who enhances life by curing cancer. His sister may dream that she will expand frontiers by becoming the first astronaut to travel to Mars, perhaps beyond.

He can be that doctor. She can be that astronaut...or a scientist...or an engineer...or president of the United States. The big dreams can come true, but only if we continue to be a nation that presses forward, that takes on bold tasks, that lets our children know we're making the critical long-term and high-risk investments in their future.

Encouraging big dreams, then making them come true: that's how we can make the greatest nation on Earth...greater still.